

REGISTRY UPDATE



Spring 2003

In this issue of the Registry Update, read all about the recent System of Registries Conference, a successful follow-up to last year's Environmental Data Registry (EDR) User's Conference. Also, read about the new XML Registry developed to support the Environmental Information Exchange Network (Exchange Network), and the current status of data standards development.

EPA Sponsors System of Registries (SoR) Conference

For the second straight year, the Office on Environmental Information (OEI) has hosted a conference for users of Agency registries supporting metadata management and data standards. The purpose of this year's conference was to promote the System of Registries—the Office of Environmental Information's (OEI) virtual gateway to Agency registries.

EPA's Chief Information Officer, Kim Nelson, kicked off the meeting with a presentation on the critical role registries and data standards play in supporting quality information for sound environmental decision making. Presentations from this one day meeting included:

- An overview of EPA's System of Registries;
- The role of registries as tools for supporting environmental information integration and EPA's metadata strategy;

- The role of registries and data standards within the Environmental Information Exchange Network; and
- Strategies for implementing data standards.

A number of improvements were made to the registries as a result of user feedback from last year's conference. To foster continued improvements, participants were given a "guided tour" of the registries to elicit feedback for further improvements. A hands-on session afforded participants the opportunity to perform various registry-specific operations and to ask questions regarding how to use the registries to support their needs.

This year's conference put special emphasis on data standards implementation. Data standards are critical to the success of EPA's information integration initiatives, including the Enterprise Architecture and the Environmental Information Exchange Network. During the event, the Office of Information Collection awarded its first ever *Data Standards Star Award* to the National Emissions Inventory (NEI) team of the Office of Air and Radiation. This award was given in recognition of database modifications made to conform with all applicable data standards and for development of a new data exchange format for use by local, state, tribal, and regional reporting entities.

The conference was held on March 20, 2003, at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications



(NCSA) in Arlington, Virginia. The meeting attracted 65 participants from EPA, states, other federal agencies, private industry, and representatives from the Chemical Abstracts Service. The state-of-the-art NCSA facility enabled several participants to attend remotely through video and Internet (WebEx) conferencing. Feedback on the conference was very positive, and plans are underway to deliver another conference in 2004! Conference presentations are available at <http://www.epa.gov/sor/>.

Interim XML Registry for the Environmental Information Exchange Network

The Environmental Information Exchange Network is a series of agreements and practices between EPA and its state partners that was established for the purpose of identifying the most effective way to share information. The members of the Exchange Network have determined that it will support the use of eXtensible Markup Language (XML) as the preferred form for exchanging information. XML was chosen for its currency and flexibility. To take full advantage of the benefits XML offers, well-formed blocks of information or XML schema and schema fragments need to be developed. This modular development of commonly shared information can then be adopted by other parties for reuse, which results in greater efficiency and consistency of the information exchanged.

To promote the development of well-formed schema and their subsequent reuse, an environment is needed to advertise work under development and products that have been sufficiently reviewed to be promoted for reuse. The XML Registry serves this purpose. Because XML is a relatively new language and the technical options for developing registries are evolving, the Exchange Network, prior to investing in a more sophisticated application or service, has developed a temporary solution that has some limitations. After the Network considered a number

of temporary solutions, they chose an interim registry consisting of the Exchange Network's Web site and the Environmental Data Registry (EDR).

The interim registry can be accessed through <http://www.exchangenetwork.net>, by clicking on "registry." In addition to hosting schema, the Exchange Network's Web site serves as the portal to background information and news, and explains how to submit schema for consideration and review. The EDR serves as the search engine and holds the metadata that should accompany any schema submission. This combination was an extremely economical use of existing resources that proved to work very well in satisfying the basic needs of the Exchange Network. It is anticipated that as experience is gained through the use of the interim registry, functional requirements needed to support the Exchange Network will be better understood. During the interim period, commercially available products and services are expected to mature, which could inform the selection of a more permanent solution.

EPA/State Data Standards Progress

EPA/state data standards program progress:

- EPA has approved the Tribal Identifier and the Enforcement and Compliance data standards and their associated business rules.
- The Environmental Data Standards Council (EDSC) has approved the Reporting Water Quality Results for Chemical and Microbiological Analytes and the Contact Information data standards.
- The EDSC is currently developing three additional data standards: Permitting II, Laboratory Results, and Federal Facility Identification. Permitting II and Federal Facility Identification have been published in the May 9 Federal Register Notice (68 FR 25029) for public review and comment.



For additional information, contact Sara Hisel McCoy, Data Standards Branch Chief, Office of Environmental Information at 202-566-1649, hisel-mccoy.sara@epa.gov. For current and previous issues of the newsletter, see the Newsletter page. Visit the System of Registries at <http://www.epa.gov/sor/> for related information.